R. B. Thomson

REFORMATION TODAY '75

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Peter Parkinson and the Reformed Baptist Church at Leeds

Featured above is the pastor of the Leeds Reformed Baptist Church and his dog Marcus. Peter's wife and two small children did not take to the idea of photos (or perhaps did not trust the photographer!) so Marcus gave colour to the picture. Not as though the dynamic pastor at Leeds needs colour to add to his personality, this being one of the attractive features of the work which, having begun two years ago, finally crystallised in the form of a church covenanting together on the 18 May this year. There were three elders in the membership of twenty-seven members. Eight were baptized during July bringing the total to thirty-five. The church meets in a hired building but the centrality of the meeting-place is an encouragement to students, many of whom attend. As with several other pastors (Ron Edmonds of California, for instance), Peter Parkinson has worked in a secular capacity, first whole-time and then part-time, before finally being able to benefit the church with a full-time ministry. He began by training in the notoriously liberal Northern Baptist College and, surviving that with his faith intact, went into a Baptist Union Church. There he was subjected to onslaughts which would have finished off many with less resilience. Following secession he formed a group of those who love the doctrines of grace and this has led now to the formation of the church described above. There is a diversity of members as to background and race. Some, including the doctors Liz and Nigel Jones, formerly of Cuckfield, come from the south of England. Leeds has a large population and the potential is very great. Peter Parkinson is strong in the promotion of Reformed Literature and has a vision for his native Yorkshire, looking for the day when a sound ministry will be available from one end to the other of the largest county in Britain. If you visit Yorkshire and wish to attend one of the services the address for information is as follows: 36 *Kingsley Avenue, Adel, Leeds, LS*16 7*DA. If you call, wait outside until you have been introduced to Marcus*!

Editorial

A New Association

SUGGESTION HAS BEEN MADE THAT, AS A CHURCH, WE PARTICIPATE IN THE FORMING of a new association of churches. This could be considered locally, where we have very happy and close bonds with those nearby, or universally, as we have brotherly ties with churches all over the English-speaking world. But apart from the objections held by these other assemblies we see no advantage in formalising or legalising what the Holy Spirit has been pleased to give us. As need arises we co-operate in a hundred different ways. We are glad for informal association with isolated churches and know of many who can respond to a call of need from such. For instance, since the Carey conference at Leeds one church has sent £50 a month to a newly-planted church thousands of miles away, on the strength of one meeting with the pastor. Other similar instances could be cited such as a group of five churches associating for a specific purpose of supporting a missionary.

The possibilities of power and fame for starting something new could, to some, be very attractive, and idealistically the advantages could appear most alluring. But there is always a debt to be paid. What may help some may be a curse to others. The advantages are for those within for, once you draw the line for those included, you have also drawn a line for those excluded! And so a new wall of partition is erected within evangelicalism. Many Presbyterian and Baptist groups exist, with which fellowship is either difficult or impossible. There are no such denominations in the New Testament. When a problem arose there was a conference which met but once.

If a new association is begun it would be a declaration of no confidence in existing associations. In Britain we already have a variety of associations from the Strict Baptists to the B.E.C. (British Evangelical Council). The Strict Baptists have an association which meets annually. The majority of those who attend could be better described as Reformed Baptists. Within the loosely affiliated group are agencies designed to help needy, new or struggling causes. Crawley and Cuckfield both sprang from dying embers and received financial help to make old buildings tenable. Let us strengthen the things which remain and support what already exists.

From observation in travels abroad and in Britain I am persuaded that we do not possess anything which is superior to what has already been, by way of groupings. Also I have observed that we can achieve all we need without the luxury of special formalised committees. But there are some who by natural disposition love committee meetings, and all the paraphernalia which go with them. One brother suggested that we should meet in the form of an association four times a year—an appalling prospect for those who can scarcely make it once a year for a "get-together" inspirational conference! If in a revival we were compelled by sheer necessity to attend to business arising four times a year that would be different, but why construct an agenda?

Reformed Baptist churches which have emerged in recent years have enjoyed a wonderful spiritual liberty. One reason for that is the absence of a com-

continued overleaf

Front cover. Haldane's Tabernacle, Edinburgh, illustrates well the Puritan style meeting house. See article by John Davison.

John Davison, who writes for us here, is a qualified Architect and Town Planner, and pastors a church in Perth, Scotland.

Reformation in the Meeting House

DURING THE LAST FEW CAREY CONFERENCES A TRADITION HAS BEEN established of visiting some Puritan Meeting House in the vicinity of the Conference centre. These visits have created considerable interest in the question of the type of accommodation used by churches and the layout most suitable to the needs of Reformed worship. It is clear that many would welcome a consideration of this subject since it affects every church and, rightly or wrongly, frequently involves the church in its greatest financial outlay.

It has become normal among evangelicals, in contrast to those holding ritualistic views, not to be too particular about the building in which the local church worships. Quite correctly, the emphasis has been placed on the presence of Christ in the midst of his people wherever two or three are gathered in his name. "God can bless us in a tin shed" has become the attitude of many, and it appears normal that the more spirited the church, the less attention is paid to the environment of worship, as if there is something very worldly in desiring a well designed place of worship. From a superficial reading of the Bible many would claim that there is nothing laid down in Scripture to dictate the form of such a place.

The results of this attitude are too obvious to require attention and comment, and are not only a barrier to outsiders whom we seek to reach,

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EDITORIAL—*continued*

petitive spirit with one group vying with another for adherents. Some of those seceding from the Baptist Union formed an association but here, typically, there is a lack of freedom to associate with others outside the group, no written law, mind you, but just fear of suspicion of disloyalty.

Fundamental to our practice is consultation. The thoughts expressed in this editorial are the result of discussion with the other elders of the church. They are totally opposed to a new association. So are pastors up and down the country. Experienced ministers in the South and West of America have been consulted and they are of the opinion that association has restricted and parochialised the spread of the Reformed faith in their country. The possibility of mini-popes has also been a threat. When asked for his views Herbert Carson, for good measure, included some correction of my own cherished views of the eldership. You may well wish to respond to his article. Rod Badams has received most interesting letters following his article in the last issue. A new association! A blessing or a curse? What is your view?

and an inconvenience to our worship but are dishonouring to God in failing to present a correct, biblically-based expression of our faith. In *Christ and Architecture*, which is perhaps the only book on the subject of relating Reformed worship to its architectural expression, Donald I. Bruggink states: "Architecture for Churches is a matter of Gospel. A church that is interested in proclaiming the gospel must also be interested in architecture, for year after year the architecture of the Church proclaims a message that either augments the preached Word or conflicts with it . . . if the gospel of Christ is worthy of accurate verbal proclamation week by week, it is also worthy of faithful architectural proclamation, where its message speaks year by year."[1]

Historical Retrospect

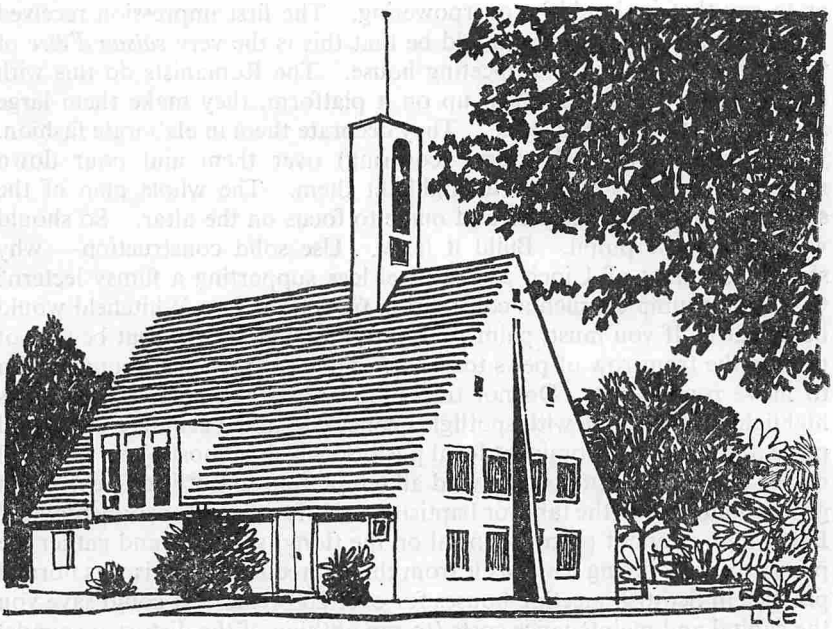
The rich legacy of church buildings which we possess in Britain shows clearly in concrete terms the various beliefs and practices of the worshippers over the centuries. In the medieval Gothic structures the long nave was designed for the ceremonial processions and the chancel, cut off by a rood-screen from the remainder of the building, was the province of the priests, where they performed the superstitious rites of the Roman Church. The columned nave with its mysterious lighting from (idolatrous) stained glass windows was not designed for the hearing of sermons. At the Reformation this was all changed. The preaching of the gospel was so important that the Reformers could not allow the churches to remain as they were. The stone altars which spoke so forcibly of the blasphemies of the mass and denied the finished work of Christ were broken up. A wooden communion table was set up in the chancel. The rood-screen was torn down and the faithful welcomed into the chancel to sit around the table in primitive apostolic simplicity. Out went the stained glass and in its place was substituted plain glass to let in more light so that the common people could open their Bibles and follow the sermon. A prominent place was assigned to the pulpit on the long side of the nave to allow as many as possible to gather within sound of the Word of life. A large sounding board would be constructed over the pulpit to emphasise its importance and to prevent the words of the preacher being lost in the high vaulted roof. To the Reformers these matters were not things indifferent, they were vital to the proper functioning and expression of the church. However, like Stephen, they believed that "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands", and in a time of crisis, such as that experienced by the 17th century Scottish Covenanters, men of this stamp were prepared to forsake their buildings and continue to worship in the open air or in barns. So we must avoid regarding the place of worship as a peculiarly holy place consecrated in some mysterious manner and in which alone God is to be found but must also avoid the opposite view that anything will do for the worship of God. In the Old Testament the prophet Haggai took the people to task for looking after the building of their own houses when they should have given due attention to the temple.

Is it not, therefore, unscriptural of us today to be so particular about arranging our own homes, while giving little or no attention to the ordering of the house of God?

At the heart of the Reformed faith is the doctrine of justification by faith alone in the finished work of Christ. The Bible declares that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). To the Reformers this meant that the one over-riding factor in all their thinking was the preaching of this Word. Only by the means of "the foolishness of preaching" (1 Cor. 1:21) had it pleased God to save men. Now preaching affects the intellect—it is not primarily a matter of the emotions. In the medieval period men were taught to worship God through their emotions. In preaching the emphasis is upon the understanding—the rational part of man. The Reformers found the perfect vehicle for the expression of this rational (not rationalistic) approach in the new style of architecture introduced at the Renaissance. The Renaissance movement in learning and the arts took place simultaneously with the Reformation, and its clear logical approach to architecture commended itself to the Protestant churches. Instead of striving to impress the congregation with mysterious and dramatic effects the whole object was to enlighten men and women by the proclamation of divine truth and everything in the house of God was geared to this end. Consequently, new places of worship (designated "meeting houses", rather than the term "chapel" which is likely to be confused with Romanist places of worship or "church" which applies to the company of believers) represented a totally new concept. The shape of the building tended to become more square so as to ensure that the maximum number of hearers were gathered as near as possible to the preacher, to hear the Word proclaimed. Columns were eliminated or reduced in size by the use of cast iron so that the congregation could see the preacher. A flat ceiling was introduced to eliminate echo and to distribute the preacher's voice throughout the building.[2] The pulpit was given emphasis by its size and prominence and was fitted with a sounding board—a device over the head of the preacher to deflect his voice to all sections of the assembled congregation. Large clear windows were provided to give light to those who could follow the preacher as he read and expounded the Word. Galleries were provided to increase the number of people who were within good hearing distance of the preacher. The whole effect was at once simple, dignified and highly meaningful. Everything was in its correct place—right down to the precentor's box immediately below the pulpit from which the singing was led, and the large communion table around which the believers would literally sit in imitation of the example of the disciples at the institution of the Lord's supper.

Governing Factors

All buildings are erected to fulfil some particular requirement and it is axiomatic that architecture begins with the solution of the functional



The Reformed Church, Bant, Holland
Homeliness, dignity and economy achieved through simplicity

needs. Therefore it is essential when planning a new meeting house, or re-arranging one which exists, that thinking must start with the inside, where the activity goes on. Creating an external "impression" is secondary. In this respect the Victorians started the wrong way round. Protestants with an inferiority complex built their meeting houses to look "ecclesiastical" by use of the Gothic style[3] and these were indistinguishable from what Bunyan called the "Steeple houses" of the establishment or the "Mass houses" of the Papists. The resulting interiors were frequently much less suitable for Reformed worship than the old fashioned "preaching boxes" of the 17th and 18th centuries. When the young Spurgeon burst upon the London scene it was at the very height of the theological movement back to ritualism. He decisively entered his theological protest against this movement and backed home his doctrinal orthodoxy by stipulating that the new Metropolitan Tabernacle be erected in the old fashioned classical "Grecian" style.[4] In essence this building was nothing more than an outsize Puritan meeting house with the people gathered round the preacher's rostrum in circular form rather than in the square shape. What then are the basic factors which should govern the design of our meeting houses?

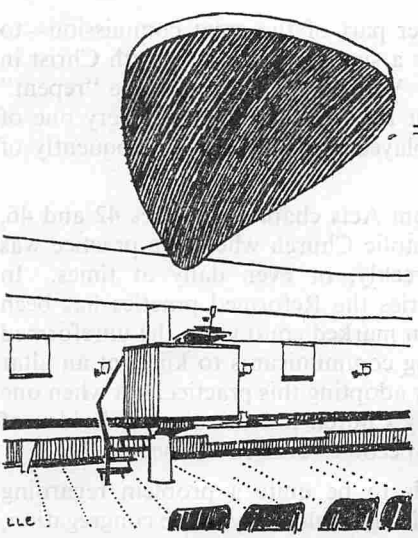
(1) *The centrality of the preaching of the Word*

The pulpit must be prominent above everything else. I would go so far

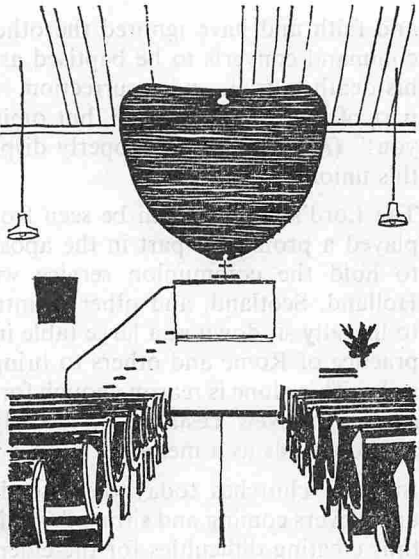
as to say that it should be overpowering. The first impression received by an outsider on entering should be that this is the very *raison d'être* of the place. No pulpit—no meeting house. The Romanists do this with their altars. They raise them up on a platform, they make them large and build with enduring stone. They decorate them in elaborate fashion. They erect a huge baldachino (covering) over them and pour down mysterious sources of light to highlight them. The whole plan of the sanctuary is subordinated to and made to focus on the altar. So should we do with the pulpit. Build it large. Use solid construction— why should it consist of 1 inch square steel legs supporting a flimsy lectern? One good thump on such a contraption from a modern Whitefield would be its end! If you must, paint it brightly! Make it high, but beware of placing the front row of pews too near. Give the preacher enough room to move round in it. Do not trap him. Make sure that the pulpit is highlighted, if need be with spotlights concealed in the ceiling. Above all place it in the most prominent focal position which in most plans is central on the end wall. Studiously avoid all temptation to put it off-centre and give prominence to the table or baptistry—this is a sign of sacramentalism! Better still, why not place it central on the (long) side wall and gather the pews around it facing towards it from three directions? This was normal practice in Scottish meeting houses for over 200 years. It could save you the capital and maintenance costs (to say nothing of the distorted sounds) of an amplifier system, or, alternatively, preserve the pastor's voice for a few years longer. The use of an amplifier system in a new building is quite unnecessary if it is designed properly and quite undesirable in view of the inevitable distortion and "remoteness of the preacher" which it produces. Furthermore, there is a direct link between the eye and the ear.[5] Again, Spurgeon realised this, and ensured that children from the Orphanage sat as near the pulpit as possible so that they could *see* him and thus be enabled to *hear* him. It is a fact that if the eye cannot see the preacher, the mind tends to wander. The preacher can tell you much with his hands and if he can be seen comfortably without strain upon the vertebrae of the hearers it will produce better listening. The use of a sounding board above the pulpit will greatly aid the distribution of the preacher's voice and will add tremendous emphasis, and thus importance, to the exposition of the Scripture.

(2) *The Significance of the Sacraments*

There is no ground in Scripture for ignoring the importance of baptism and the Lord's supper. In fact because they were so clearly ordained by our Lord himself in his earthly ministry, we must pay due attention to their recognition and expression in our meeting houses. However, it is clear from Acts chapter 2 verse 42 that the "Apostles' doctrine" (i.e., preaching) took precedence over the breaking of bread. This gives us the clue to the relationship of preaching and the sacraments in the life of the local church, and hence in all honesty our meeting houses should express



An interesting relationship. An enormous communion table seating 70 placed behind an elegant pulpit with sounding board over.



The pulpit must predominate. (Church of the Advent, the Hague-Loosduinen, Holland.)

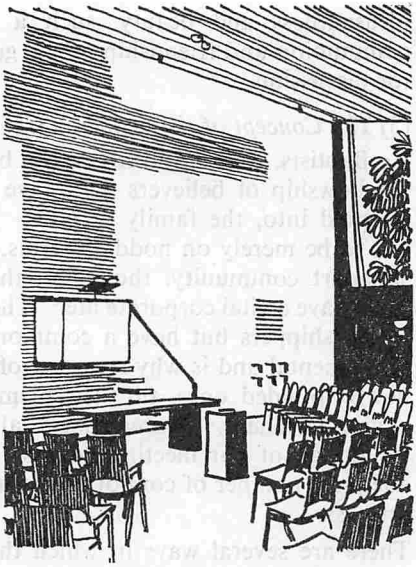
this. The Word is paramount, but the sacraments are still obvious and important. The solution generally adopted in the past has been to place a large pulpit behind and above the table. But regrettably the baptistry has been almost forgotten; in fact stowed away under the floor as if Baptists have an embarrassment hidden below the deck of which they are ashamed. We do not need to place it half way up the end wall, nor situate it immediately inside the entrance to the meeting house, like some subterranean public convenience down which worshippers are prone to fall. I am not exaggerating—it is not unknown for paedo-baptists to mistake such baptistries (especially when tiled) for the church toilets! Surely there is a better method of impressing upon our friends the serious nature of the ordinance. If the congregation is located on a flat floor the baptistry will need to be raised up to the view of all and this will make it necessary to raise the pulpit still higher. However, if the congregation can be seated on a sloping floor (and how few sites are flat) then a "grand-stand" effect, (like the slopes of Jordan where John's activities could be clearly watched) is obtained, and the baptistry can be located at floor level with the pulpit above, but not too high. Other solutions can be devised providing the *evidence* of the baptistry is to be seen at all times, not only to remind believers of their obligations (a reason frequently brought forward for the paedo-baptist arrangement where the font is placed near the main entrance door) but also as a challenge and testimony to un-believers. For too long we have preached a lop-sided Gospel of repentance

and faith and have ignored the other part of the great commission—to command converts to be baptised as a sign of their union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. We are apt to preach the "repent" part of Peter's exhortation, but omit the "and be baptised every one of you!" (Acts 2:38). A properly displayed baptistry speaks eloquently of this union.

The Lord's table, as can be seen from Acts chapter 2, verses 42 and 46, played a prominent part in the apostolic Church where the practice was to hold the communion service weekly, or even daily at times. In Holland, Scotland, and other countries the Reformed practice has been to literally sit down at a large table in marked contrast to the unreformed practice of Rome and others to bring communicants to kneel at an altar rail. This alone is reason enough for adopting this practice, but when one studies the New Testament and early Church practice the whole idea of regarding this as a memorial supper becomes even more meaningful.

In some churches today there tends to be quite a problem regarding unbelievers coming and sitting down in the main body of the congregation, thus creating difficulties for the elders in the distribution of the elements during the communion service. To avoid this there is much to be said for the communicants, at least in small churches of under 100 members, coming forward to sit around a long table or a series of tables. One new church has six linked tables accommodating 80 communicants at each sitting. In Holland, some churches have a "communion room" attached to and open to, the main body of the meeting house, but nevertheless recognisable as a separate space. This can also be used to seat overflow congregations or for other special functions. It has even been suggested that a high level "upper room" might be constructed off the main auditorium, but, beware! To keep pace with this exaggerated literalism, it might be necessary to turn the baptistry into a section of the river Jordan!

The table should look like a table as well as be used as one. If the Scriptural significance of the supper is to be retained by the use of the common cup and the one loaf symbolising the one body (no concessions made to modern hygienic "medicinal glass" theology!) then it would seem logical to leave the cup and the plate on the table at all times, even when not in use, as a reminder of the significance of the table. If it is objected that the church's silver plate is far too precious to leave lying around, it needs to be asked why the church doesn't use something more domestic (as would have been used by our Lord at the institution of the ordinance). Stainless steel is more practical and far cheaper, not to mention the endless possibilities presented in the realm of pottery. In fact, this point of domestic family atmosphere should be reflected in the table itself. No elaborately carved affair covered with texts is required. If a text is needed to show its function then its basic design has failed to demonstrate its use. A solid, plain wooden table or one constructed of tubular steel



The Church gathered around the Word.
(The Cornerstone Church, Santpoort, Holland.)

and plastic laminate would be ideal to convey the appropriate character. It might further be worth considering doing away with the idea of special high backed and padded chairs for the elders. Surely the Lord's table isn't the place for status symbols. Why not domestic chairs for all?

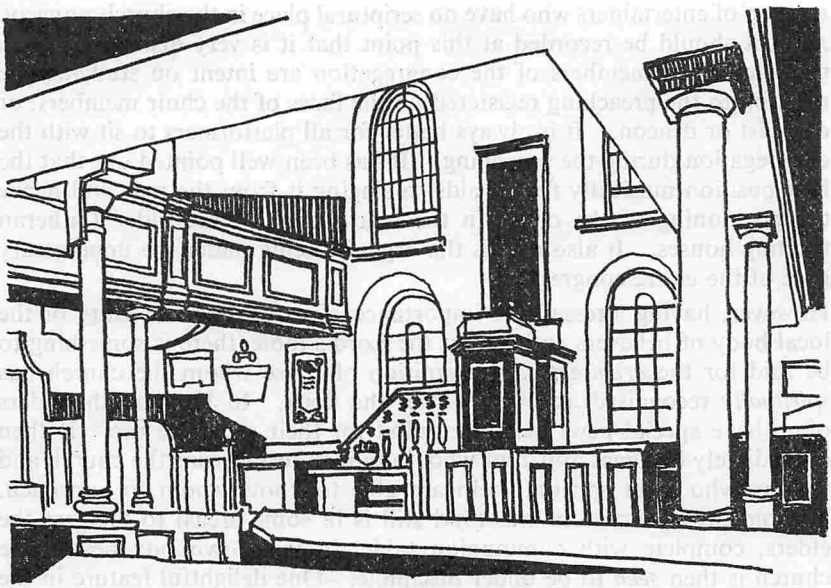
Great care should be taken to avoid misuse of the table. Its function is to serve the purpose of a family remembrance feast. It is not a flower pedestal or a resting place for offering plates. When some foreigners enter our sanctuaries, they get the impression that we worship flowers, or perhaps the organ pipes! The focal point of the meeting house must be reformed according to the Word of God and all other items, however pleasant or necessary, must be relocated. Is the offering plate system essentially biblical? When our Perth church re-adopted the traditional Scottish "box or plate at the door" system, the offerings actually increased, much to the amazement of the sceptics! By all means let our meeting houses be places of beauty and flowers have an important part to play in this, but we do not eat them at the Lord's supper, nor is it helpful to have to spend the service viewing the precentor or presiding elder peering at the congregation from behind the undergrowth, first one side, then t'other! It is even more ludicrous if he himself is bearded! In one Scottish example the worshippers cross a well planted and enclosed courtyard before entering the meeting house, but once inside their whole attention is focused upon the pulpit, table, or baptistry (whichever is in use). When they turn round to leave they are again confronted with the beauty of the flowers in the courtyard through a large picture window in the rear wall of the meeting house. Apart from serving as a place of

pleasantness and beauty, such a courtyard could administer to the communion and friendship of the gatherers, which issue we now take up for discussion.

(3) *The Concept of the Gathered Church*

As Baptists, we hold firmly to the biblical concept of the local church as a fellowship of believers who have all been born (spiritually) into, and adopted into, the family of God. The members of this fellowship are not to be merely on nodding terms, but are to live the common life of a set-apart community, though in the world they are not of the world. They have a vital corporate life. They are not just a loose conglomeration of worshippers but have a common love for each other. This unity is fundamental and is why so many of the older churches, and some of the newly founded ones, tie their members one to another by means of a church covenant.[6] Surely this vital principle must not be overlooked in the design of our meeting houses. It is not enough just to provide an adequate number of comfortable seats. Expression must be given to this oneness.

There are several ways in which this can be achieved. In an open air meeting or in medieval days before seats were introduced into ecclesiastical buildings the natural tendency is for people to gather around the preacher in a half circle. This is the most economic way in which to accommodate people around a focal point. Such a plan is eminently suitable for expressing the oneness of the local church gathered around the Word and ordinances. However, as the use of chairs tends to emphasise individualism and the cost of curved pews is prohibitive, it may be necessary to modify the idea by straightening out the seating lines. In the old Puritan meeting houses and throughout the 18th century the general arrangement was to have the pews arranged in three blocks facing inwards on three sides of a square or rectangle with the pulpit on the fourth. This involves the preacher in extra work in preaching through an arc of 180 degrees. But it has the advantage of causing him to look specifically at the different groups rather than staring into space in the general direction of the congregation, most of whom are sheltering behind the people in front of them. With the three-sided arrangement many more people are brought within a short range of the preacher. The use of balconies on one, two or three sides can further add to the expression of the gathered church and bring the congregation nearer to the preacher. Another method is to place the congregation in a "pit" or sunken area below the general floor level of the perimeter circulation spaces. The congregation thus becomes an entity in its own right. Every attempt to divide the congregational seating in two by a central aisle must be stoutly resisted. There is nothing worse practically than to preach to an aisle in a church divided into two groups without any logical explanation for such a division. However, the use of a two or three sided seating arrangement can be used effectively to subdivide the total sanctuary so that when small meetings are required



Toxteth Chapel, Liverpool
an example of a dignified and functional interior

(e.g., weddings, etc.) it is possible to fill only one section of the seating and thus to avoid the sparsely inhabited "prairie effect" when a few people place themselves everywhere in a large building. This disintegrated effect makes it appear as though each surviving member was suffering from an infectious disease and needed to be separated by a maximum distance from the other victims.

It is a strange fact that in recent years some Baptist churches have followed the unreformed churches in introducing choirs into their building without any New Testament justification. If it is thought that the God ordained system of congregational singing is impossible to implement in a given church and the singing is so bad that something has to be done, why not place the best singers in the rear pews to sing *with* and assist the congregation rather than locate them in the same situation as entertainers at the front facing the congregation and singing *to* them. The whole problem of entertainment in our meetings is outside the scope of this article, but it must be acknowledged that some older buildings would appear to be so ill suited to such entertainment that one wonders if their designers went out of their way to ensure that such an activity was impossible in the church. In this connection the use of a "platform" instead of a pulpit for the preaching of the Word is very open to abuse. Only one preacher is needed at one time in the pulpit and although the pulpit should be designed as visually dominating, it need not be so large as to accommodate

a group of entertainers who have no scriptural place in the church anyway. Also, it should be recorded at this point that it is very distracting for a preacher when members of the congregation are intent on studying the reaction to the preaching registered on the faces of the choir members, or organist or deacon. It is always better for all platformers to sit with the congregation during the preaching. It has been well pointed out that the best position musically for all aids to singing is from the rear and hence the positioning of the organ in the rear gallery of the older Lutheran meeting houses. It also avoids the organist being under the unnecessary gaze of the entire congregation.

However, having stressed the importance of expressing the unity of the local body of believers gathered at the Lord's table, there is something to be said for the *architectural* recognition of those whom the church has *spiritually* recognised as shepherds of the flock. In Holland the elders often have special pews near the pulpit for their exclusive use. It then immediately becomes apparent who, in human terms, runs the church and visitors who want spiritual help are able to know whom to approach. The old Scottish custom was (and still is in some areas) to lock up the elders, complete with communion table, in their own box pew. The church is then *seen* to be under discipline. One delightful feature in the Dutch churches is that space is often provided for the elders own copy of the Confession of Faith to be placed alongside the Bible in the elders' pew, symbolising the adherence of the church, through its elders, to its doctrinal basis. Woe to any visiting preacher who sees an elder reach for his copy of the Confession during the exposition!

Conclusions

The primary object of this article has been to stimulate thought rather than propose specific solutions. It will never be possible to include everything which might be desirable in a meeting house, especially if this consists of the conversion of a building originally designed for some other use. However, the principles set down provide a framework to direct thought and design. The most important matter is to obtain the right approach to the ordering of the meeting house: details will then follow naturally.

To summarise, three important factors must be kept in mind:

The Building Matters

It can either honour or dishonour our God who is worshipped in it. The Scripture exhorts us to "let all things be done decently and in order". If we are rightly concerned to return to a New Testament structure for the local church, let us ensure, so far as is possible, that this is given adequate visual expression in our meeting houses.

Buildings matter because they involve the expenditure of large sums of money given for the work of the Lord. Good design is a matter of good stewardship.

Buildings matter because, if badly designed, they can hinder the activities of the local church. Convenience and beauty must go along together.

Freedom from Bondage

One of our primary prerequisites in the realm of reformation is liberation from the rule of erroneous traditions. Generally speaking, most of what has been introduced into Christianity in the past hundred years or more is suspect or positively detrimental to true New Testament Christianity, and nowhere is this more evident than in the realm of church architecture. The sacramentalist longitudinal plan with emphasis all on the table (or altar) is now almost universal. Nearly every book dealing with the design of places of worship advocates this arrangement. Radical thinking is urgently required on the part of the Lord's people if their buildings are to avoid a direct denial in permanent visual terms of the verbal message which is proclaimed from the pulpit.

Function not Style

Lastly, attention must be concentrated primarily on the functional aspect of the design concept. This is not to say that a merely functional solution in itself is adequate, but that any solution to the design of a meeting house without an adequate functional synthesis is unsatisfactory. Basic aesthetic values arise out of imaginative functional solutions to basic functional problems, and should not be regarded as in opposition to them.[7]

May the Lord grant to his people boldness, imagination and understanding that all things might be ordered according to the New Testament pattern.

REFERENCES

[1] *Christ and Architecture* by Donald J. Bruggink and Carl H. Drappers, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965. This book is an absolute "must" in the reading of every elder and deacon. Every church should have a copy in its library.

[2] See *Preaching and Preachers*, by Dr. D. M. Lloyd-Jones, pages 162 and 163. "The first essential in a church building is that it should have good acoustic properties. . . . The one great rule, the essential rule in that respect, is a flat ceiling. . . . Flat ceilings should be compulsory. Our forefathers knew this. They built square buildings with flat ceilings, and the result was, and is, that however big they might be, they are acoustically almost perfect. It is not the size of the building that matters; the acoustics are mainly determined by the ceiling."

[3] Ibid., page 162.

[4] *The Full Harvest;* C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, pages 11-12. Spurgeon says that the reason for the Tabernacle being designed in the Grecian style was that "We have a great part of our Scriptures in the Grecian language". He also proposed, "Every Baptist place should be Grecian, never Gothic. . . . God give us the power and life of that master of the Grecian tongue, the apostle Paul, that here like wonders may be done by the preaching of the Word as were wrought by his ministry". While agreeing heartily with the latter part of Spurgeon's statement, it must be acknowledged that the former part was very much the expression of a Victorian.

[5] See *Preaching and Preachers* pages 82-83. "effective speaking involves action."

[6] 2 Cor. 8:5.

[7] It is accepted that there is no such thing as a standard plan. The needs of each church must inevitably differ in varying degrees.

Puritan Treasures

Peter Lewis brings us up to date on the subject of Puritan literature.

I AM OFTEN ASKED WHAT PURITAN works are easily available today and which should be read as good "starters" in this field. The Banner of Truth Trust has done yeoman service in this respect and is reprinting a growing number of fine productions from the Puritan era. For the general reader, the "Puritan Paperbacks" series makes an excellent beginning. Thomas Brooks' *Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices* is one good example. While flowing with the milk and honey of his rich prose, it is saved from cloying by its practical insight and teaching in the field of temptations and their antidotes. No-one can read Brooks for long without enthusiasm reaching fever-pitch!

On a quieter, but no less edifying level is Jeremiah Burroughs' *Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. Perhaps more suited in style to the modern palate than Brooks, Burroughs' plain and forcible teaching leaves the reader deeply satisfied with the treatment given and with a settled determination to respond with grateful obedience to God's wise and loving providence. Thomas Watson's *The Beatitudes* is one of the most mature of his productions, combining the scintillating style of all his works with a depth of insight which leaves the mind marvelling at the words of "him that spake as never man spake".

Of the recently reprinted volume of some of Richard Sibbes' works, one can only speak with the highest praise. Here is Puritanism at its best in some of the most celebrated treatises of the whole era, written by one of the foremost figures in the history of English Puritanism. Sibbes combines the majesty of the mountain with the modesty of the stream that runs at its foot. His style is gracious, his ministry in every subject of which he treats, "matter-full," to use an old phrase, and to have read him is to prize him above most others.

Of the sixteen volumes of John Owen's works reprinted by the Trust, one can speak with only the deepest respect and it is not too much to say, with bated breath! Massive in their thought and utterances (and, to be quite honest, Latin in their English), Owen's works will, to those who master them, stand as an incomparable Everest among the Himalayas of great theological writings. Those who begin with his more practical treatises, for example, on sin in volume six, on Christ in volume one and on Communion with God in volume two and then go to the more doctrinal works in volume three, on the Holy Spirit, will make a reasonably easy entrance on to some of his treatments of polemical divinity (of which last, volume ten's "Death of Death in the Death of Christ" is perhaps the best).

After Owen it will be a relief, mentally, to come to the works of John Flavel, published by the Banner in six volumes. The paperback published by the same Trust, Flavel's *Mystery of Providence*, will give a good sample of his clear and devout writing, and from it the Christian will learn the lesson of his Father's absolute but benevolent sovereignty. Probably the very best work produced in this series of Puritan paperbacks was William Bridge's *A Lifting up for the Downcast*. In its pastoral wisdom and strengthening counsel it can lead the Christian of our own day into a new dimension of peace, assurance and joy. It is altogether superb and it is somewhere between a tragedy and an enormity that the publishers have allowed it to go out of print! Other books by Puritans published by this publishing house are available and a catalogue will be sent by the publishers upon request.

From Evangelical Press can be obtained a number of American reprints of splendid Puritan works. There are, for example, Thomas Manton's expositions of James and Jude and John 17. The first two are commentaries and the third, sermons of the highest order. Manton always gives value for money and all his works are treasures indeed. Incidentally, if the present writer seems, to the reader, to be very free with enthusiastic commendations upon the books here mentioned it is worth remarking first, that few publishers would care to produce any but the cream of seventeenth century writers and secondly, that it was not without great experience of their works that C. H. Spurgeon styled this period "the Augustan age of evangelical literature".

From the same publishers, Evangelical Press, can be obtained Thomas Taylor's large commentary upon Titus—not, in my opinion, one of his very best productions but a solid work nevertheless.

For excellent theology and devotion, the two volumes by Thomas Goodwin, *Christ our Mediator* and *An unregenerate man's guiltiness before God* (the first available in paperback), invite the reader unfamiliar with Goodwin to a new adventure in Christian literature. Goodwin and Owen were *the* theologians of the later Puritan era.

Mention should be made here of a newly formed little publishing firm called Zoar Publications which is at present issuing small, tasteful paperbacks of Puritan sermons, including two sermons by that controversial, but in many ways incomparable gospeller, Tobias Crisp, entitled *Christ's Preeminence*. There is a generous production of Sibbes' *Divine Meditations* which should do much good in the churches for those Christians who read little but need much, and also a sermon by Thomas Gataker *The Christian on the Watch*. The only hardback published to date is that astonishing book by the otherwise unknown William Secker—*The Nonesuch Christian*. It is translated by the publishers into modern speech—and very well too—though its constant stream of epigrams will drive the most ardent Puritan-lover to distraction. Taken in small doses it really is unforgettable.

I should perhaps mention that those readers of unlimited financial resources might like to know of the international publishers George Olms Verlag, whose publications include some Puritan works, which can be obtained from Intercontinental Academic Book Supplies Ltd., Four Marks, Alton, GU34 5HT, Hants., England. These reprints include the complete works of Sibbes at about £84, and the "Practical Works" of Baxter in 23 volumes at £368. Also, and if it is not too painful, I should refer to the Cornmarket Press, 43, Conduit Street, London, W1R 0HL, which has published a magnificent first-time collection of the Puritan *Fast-Day Sermons to Parliament* in 25 volumes at £500, and plans the "other sermons" to Parliament in future.

At slightly more affordable prices than these last, the Research Colonial Library of America has published Cotton Mather's *Magna Christi Americana*, a noble folio of Puritan lives and history (my copy cost me about £25 a year or two ago). The Library has also reprinted Thomas Hooker's *The Application of Redemption* and his *The Christian's two chief lessons*. Copies can be ordered through Intercontinental Academic Book Supplies (address above). Also available through Intercontinental are the re-prints of Gregg International, which includes such titles as Paul Bayne's Commentary on Colossians 1 and 2 (Price in 1971 was £8, I do not have present price) and his *The Spiritual Armour* (1971 price £6); Ezekiel Culverwell on Faith (1971 price £9); Arthur Hildersham's *The Doctrine of fasting and prayer and humiliation for sin*, bound with his *Treatise of the Ministry* (1971 price £7); John Preston's *The New Covenant, or the Saint's Portion* (1971 price £10). Other titles available and information can be obtained from Intercontinental, at the address above.

Some people think that we can go through life ignoring things like blaring record players. But it is getting more and more difficult—the volume is always being turned up! In any case, is it our duty to ignore the culture in which we live? Jim van Zyl does not think so and has written an analysis of the part pop music plays. Christians who do enjoy modern music may find him too negative, but it will do them good to read the kind of criticism which we too seldom hear. He who has ears (with ear-plugs out) to hear, let him hear.

Modern Man and His Music

THERE IS SUCH A BEWILDERING VARIETY OF MATERIAL, MAGAZINES, BOOKS, new and old pop groups, and developments within modern popular music, that it is impossible to cover the entire scene successfully. There is enough material on Bob Dylan, or on folk music, or on the development of the blues, for us to concentrate on these specific areas alone and produce many articles. Very few are experts in this field. In fact I am tempted to doubt a man's honesty if he claims to be one! An expert would have to live, eat, sleep, and be completely immersed in pop music for a good few years before he could talk with anything like ultimate authority.

I am therefore merely an amateur making personal observations. If these are strongly expressed, they are not intended to convey an unbending dogmatism, and do not spring from ignorant prejudice but rather a deep concern for the culture in which we find ourselves. I have tried to be reasonably objective. Complete objectivity is, I believe, a constitutional impossibility for fallen man. But I have attempted, when possible, to listen to modern pop music, read the magazines, study the lyrics of songs and read books by music critics. A good deal of the underlying moral, spiritual, psychological and intellectual pre-suppositions that undergird pop music I have taken from men well acquainted with the field and sympathetic towards it.

Secular culture

Culture is never static. Like man himself, who is the creator of culture, it is a living, changing and dynamic thing. In different generations it takes on different forms. There was the golden age of Greece in the 5th century B.C. with its flowering of massive thinking and philosophy. The Renaissance period was marked by confidence in the human mind and the revival of classical studies. In the 18th century the enlightenment

is important as the beginning of the search for scientific truth entirely on rationalistic grounds.

In the past, cultural entities have usually been contained within a certain geographical area. Thus the Islamic culture of Arabia, North Africa and southern Spain could exist side by side with the medieval culture in Europe. There was the brilliant period of Dutch culture and thousands of miles away the culture of the East. Today such geographical containment is becoming a thing of the past. To an astonishing degree modern secular culture hangs like a dark umbrella over the entire planet. We are trapped in this secular framework which impinges on us and our children in so many different ways—books, magazines, radio, TV, schools and universities, films and music.

While it is music that we are examining, it is important that as background we are aware of the characteristics of this secular culture. I am indebted to an article by David Kingdon entitled *Secularism and the Gospel*, for the account that follows, but have added certain points.

Secular man sees himself as autonomous. He lives in God's world yet wants to push God out of it, and refuses to be bound to any point of reference beyond himself. Thus modern man does not believe in God, revelation, the incarnation, miracles, angels, demons, heaven or hell—in the sense in which the Christian revelation proclaims these truths. In this respect he denies the supernatural. But because he must look for an explanation for life, secular man turns (increasingly) to the occult, astrology, yoga or witchcraft. Eastern religions are becoming more and more popular in the West. According to Frances Yates in his book *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, the same kinds of things were rife among Renaissance scholars!

Secular man's thinking and calculations are entirely pragmatic and rooted in this world's principles and values. He rejects the authority of God, his prophets and apostles, his Son and his Son's church, and bows only to the authority of the individual self. He rejects God's absolutes in favour of his own relative principles which he then makes his own personal and private absolute laws! This is the essence of worldliness.

Inevitably this rootless and God-defying culture must lead men into degeneration and despair. This is not to say that all secular men are blatantly evil and degenerate or that all modern culture is wicked. The trends are, however, unmistakeable. To take one example, a good deal of modern art, while technically and professionally brilliant, actually destroys God's creation of beauty, law and order in nature and in man. Men like Salvador Dali and Jackson Pollock have created a new world of disorder, absurdity and despair. Other examples could be cited in literature, films and drama. And what about the sexual exploitation of

the younger jet-set by fashion houses who manipulate large hordes of unthinking teenagers by making them compulsive buyers of the latest trends?

Pop music is an integral part of this culture and to it we now turn.

Pop music

This broad term covers such forms as the blues, rhythm and blues, country and western, jazz, rock and roll, folk, acid rock, underground, spirituals and gospel style. These often overlap and it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference.

I would suggest six historical milestones to help us see the developing patterns.

Negro blues. This style is recognised to be the greatest single influence on nearly every department of pop. Dating the blues is difficult, but the beginnings are recognisable by about the middle of the 19th century. The blues sprang from the negroes in the southern states of America—Louisiana, Mississippi and southern Tennessee. They probably evolved out of field songs sung by men working in the cotton plantations, lumber factories or farms.

In contrast to the more middle-class negroes, these people were only very nominal churchgoers. They worked long hours, were lonely, despised, hungry, ill, poor and constantly in trouble through drink, fighting and stealing. They developed the blues style to escape the sadness of prison, work, floggings, shanty-housing and two-timing women. From the individual performers emerged the groups, called jug-bands (jugs, guitar, piano and bass) which played in bars, brothels, white clubs or in lumber camps. Reacting against the whites and the middle-class negroes, the blues singers were hostile to the Christian faith. Emphasis was placed on the pleasure of this world, particularly the enjoyment of illicit sex. Many songs voiced rebellion against hard work and responsibility, and gave vent to extreme melancholy and despair. Heaven, if it existed, was to be peopled with dancing girls.

Rod Gruver, in an article in *Down Beat* entitled the "Blues as Secular Religion" says: "The Blues poets also insist that no other love can compare with the love that comes either before or outside marriage." To further this philosophy heavy beat was shamelessly exploited and manipulated. It became an instrument to channel man's unbridled licentiousness into a focal point of sensual sex. To quote again from Rod Gruver: "As James Baldwin has said: 'It is not too much to say that whoever wishes to become a truly moral human being . . . must first divorce himself from all the prohibitions, crimes, and hypocrisies of the Christian Church. . . .' "

This message of revolt against all biblical and godly standards and laws has completely permeated the world of pop music. That the message and philosophy of the blues is basically hostile to the Christian faith should be obvious. What may not be realised is that the blues singers and writers are today, by means of their destructive ideology, wreaking a terrible revenge on the white society which was determined to suppress them.

Rock and Elvis. In April, 1954, an ageing country and western singer, Bill Haley, recorded *Rock around the clock.* By 1955 they were rocking round the world and this single eventually cut 15 million copies. The rock revolution had begun.

However, it was Elvis Presley who captivated teenagers in an unprecedented manner, and became the symbol and archetype of all pop singers to follow. Born in Mississippi, he was influenced by the blues. His early life was not auspicious. Nik Cohn describes him as admiring truck drivers, collecting teddy bears, eating banana sandwiches at bedtime and adoring his mother. But it was his singing which was different. He not only sang but with his gyrating manner he publically paraded sensuality during his performances in a new way. Strangely perhaps, on his tours he sang a sprinkling of hymns between the rock songs. In the southern states, where he had been raised, there was still a strong emphasis on the Tennessee Ernie Ford style gospel.

Most of the early rock singers came from the South and were heavily influenced by the music and message of the blues. They included names like Little Richard from Georgia, Buddy Holly from Texas, and Jerry Lee Lewis from Louisiana.

The Beatles. From 1959-1963 three singers influenced the British pop scene. They were Billy Fury, Adam Faith and Cliff Richard. Their influence was slight, however, by comparison with the group who took over from them in 1963—the Beatles. Elvis, too, was soon eclipsed, as the Beatles rose to a position of popularity throughout the world which would have before been considered impossible.

The most famous L.P. from the Beatles was probably *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.* Part of their importance lies in the fact that they introduced a new and sometimes haunting note of seriousness and reflectiveness into many of their songs. *Mr. Nowhere Man* and *Eleanor Rigby* are good examples. They also brought large doses of Eastern philosophy into the West through their interest in yoga and transcendental meditation. The history of the group is one of steady decay from their origin as four lively lads from Liverpool.

The Rolling Stones. This group emerged in 1965 and immediately introduced a violent streak into the pop scene. Nik Cohn has this to say: " . . . they were mean and nasty . . . and they beat out the toughest,

crudest, most offensive noise any English band had ever made". (*Wop-BopaLooBopLopBamBoom*, Paladin Books). They contributed a whole new mood of arrogance, independence and revolt. Through them the stage was also set for what has become known as underground music.

Bob Dylan and folk music. Dylan, a Jewish boy born with the name Robert Zimmerman, was deeply influenced by the blues, especially by Woody Guthrie. He took the name Dylan from Dylan Thomas, the Welsh poet. In the folk revival which took place in the U.S.A. in the 1960's, Bob Dylan, Judy Collins and Joan Baez were the major figures. Dylan in particular had enormous influence. His thoughtful songs covered subjects like war, gambling, poverty, death and social inequality. From him came the protest songs, *Blowing in the Wind*, *Masters of War* and *The Times they are a-changing.*

Folk music is, in my view, one of the brighter aspects of pop. It has its fair share of sensual songs, but also has some very beautiful, sometimes traditional, ballads. There are attractive ballads to be found in most sectors of pop music, and many country and western songs are most enjoyable and completely free from lewdness.

Unisex singers. David Bowie, Alice Cooper and the Edgar Winter Band are examples here. The men wear paint, pearls and silver suits. The whole appeal is unnatural. Indeed the exploits of Alice Cooper in his stage performances are close to the demonic. But what can be expected from people who believe everything is absurd? In the *Hit Parader* (July 1973), Cooper, talking about himself, says: "Alice Cooper isn't trying to say anything. No message. No nothing. We're just putting on a show. Absurdity is a big part of it. We are all absurd in one way or another. Alice Cooper intensifies the absurdity in everyone. It's a free thing for us. We can do whatever we want to do. Absurdity is marvellous because it doesn't have to strive to be anything other than what it is. It exists on its own energy."

Jean-Paul Sartre, of whom Alice Cooper has probably never heard (I hope I am not being unjust here), could hardly have done better than that in summing up the hopelessness of modern man.

This concludes my historical survey of the pop scene. New groups are, of course, always coming along. The Bay City Rollers is one recent group to capture popular attention. But so far none seem to have contributed towards a significant new development or style in pop.

In the second part of this article, Jim van Zyl goes on to examine the most important characteristics, for the Christian, of modern man's music. We hope to print this analysis in the next issue. He has also commented on the influence of secular music on Christian music. It would be instructive to devote an article to this subject. How is reformation needed in the realm of Christian music?

Doctrinal or Doctrinaire?

Herbert Carson

CHRISTIANS ARE INTENDED TO TAKE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE SERIOUSLY. TO BE doctrinal in our thinking, in our worship and in our living is to be normal by New Testament standards. A doctrinal attitude is one which submits the whole of life to the constant scrutiny of the Word of God.

But it is fatally easy for the doctrinal Christian to slide into the position of becoming doctrinaire. This is an attitude sufficiently close to the right approach to be plausible. Indeed it can be so similar, that a Christian does not even recognize when he is acting in a doctrinaire fashion. He may be at his most doctrinaire when he fondly imagines that he is being most doctrinal!

The doctrinaire is the man who holds the right doctrine, but does so without taking into account other important factors. He is the theorist who is so concerned to maintain the truth of the doctrine, that he forgets the very people the doctrines are supposed to help. So, for example, he can present his gospel with impeccable orthodoxy, but the orthodoxy has become so important that he could preach his sermon as easily in an empty building, since there is little feeling for the people supposedly involved.

The doctrinaire approach also takes a partial view of biblical truth. Some doctrines are viewed as being so vital that they must be stressed. But the neglect of other truths means that the ones given prominence are themselves distorted because they are forced into a position of undue emphasis.

There is also a tendency to ignore past history. He can only see the immediate situation, and concludes that the doctrine he stresses is the answer. He forgets that other idealists have in the past had a similar conviction that by the rediscovery of forgotten truths they had the answer to the Church's problems. Their failures, in spite of their earnestness, should have a salutary effect. But the doctrinaire feels he has heaven's mandate to press on.

Now let us admit frankly that we who glory in the title "Reformed" are particularly susceptible to this danger of becoming theoretical and impractical. Our very strength can so easily become our weakness. We take doctrine seriously. We also believe that God means us to use our minds, and so we take logic seriously. We reject compromise as far as biblical truth is concerned. We have no time for a merely pragmatic approach. We insist that it is not enough to ask the question—"Does it work?" The fundamental question we feel we must ask is—"Is it true?" But unless we keep a careful watch we find ourselves so stressing those doctrines which have been neglected by many, that we become unbalanced in our emphasis. We discover that we are so passionately committed to orthodoxy that we lose sight of people. Our preaching, if we are not

careful, becomes abstract, detached from life, theoretical. We are no longer in an actual pastoral situation, but in an ivory tower where theological formulation is carried on with rigour. But sometimes the precision of our conclusions is matched by their irrelevance.

The answer to these dangers is not to abandon our concern for doctrinal purity. We must not join the drifting crowd of the doctrinally uncommitted. Truth is too precious to be bartered away. We must maintain the reformed faith in all its purity. But we must keep a rigorous watch on ourselves. The danger of becoming theoretical must be always in view.

There are two areas of discussion among reformed men where I see a particular danger of our becoming doctrinaire. They are the issues of eldership in the local church and of the association of churches.

The Eldership

I need not take time to point out the important role of the elders in the New Testament churches. This magazine has used a great deal of space —and its editor a great deal of vocal energy—in encouraging the churches to regain the New Testament pattern. This is a development to be welcomed—as is the recovery of any biblical truth which has been obscured or forgotten. But there are dangers!

The institution of the eldership can easily become the great goal of church life. Forgetting that it has been instituted by the Lord primarily for the benefit of the church, we can invert the order and view the church as if one of its prime functions was to develop elders!

With some men one gets the impression that the establishment of the eldership is the new panacea for vigorous church life. This is the linchpin, and if it is in place then progress will follow. But this ignores at least two very important facts. In the first place the sovereign God refuses to be controlled by our structures even though they are ordained by him. When we have fulfilled all his mandates we cannot command him, we must still submit. In the second place, we must remember that the eldership is composed of men—fallible men and sinful men. We may have the structures carefully worked out, but without godly men the structures will be lifeless.

Then again we may be so keen to stress equality of the eldership that we belittle the leadership of the minister. In 1 Timothy, chapter 5 there is a distinction within the eldership. In Revelation, chapters 1-3 there is a single messenger to whom the message for each church is sent. It is not surprising, then, to discover that by the beginning of the second century, in the time of Ignatius, the bishop among the bishops, the first among equals, is the pattern in the church. The degeneration was in a different direction, when the chief among equals became, not simply the leader of the local church, but the leader of a number of local churches. But in the local church situation we must not let our passion for parity blind us to the need of a leader—who is always an under-shepherd as far as the

final authority of Christ is concerned, but to whom the Lord has given a mandate to lead the flock.

An Association Of Churches

Clearly it is not good for a local church to be in isolation. Without the corrective of fellowship with other churches it is very easy to become inward-looking and self-important, and to major on minors. On the other hand, without the strength which comes from others the local church can become discouraged by the apathy which surrounds it, or succumb to the problems within its own ranks. Just as the individual Christian needs his fellow believers, so the local church needs the fellowship of other local churches.

But here again we must beware of the theoretical approach. Are we to gather together into an association only those churches which share what we believe to be the fundamentals of the biblical faith? What then is the doctrinal basis on which we shall stand? Does this mean some kind of constitution? What will be the limits of the association? While we are trying to answer some of these questions we do well to reflect on some of the dangers which have appeared in history, and which some with denominational affiliations would readily corroborate.

The moment a list of churches is drawn up—even a very informal list—the issue arises, not only as to who should be included, but also who should be excluded! Do you have in view an association of reformed Baptist churches? Does this mean you part company in the matter of church fellowship with a reformed man who is still in a Baptist Union church, and has not yet seen his way to secede? Does it mean that you cannot have church fellowship—as distinct from purely personal fellowship—with a reformed paedo-baptist church? Would we have shunned such fellowship with John Owen's church because he was not a Baptist?

Then again, in spite of all the high hopes, structures have always shown a marked tendency to grow. Denominationalism is an unbelievably sturdy plant! If churches come together in an association, a union, a fellowship —the title may vary—it is still, even in a very simple way, a rudimentary organization. But being together, church leaders feel they must act together and so a committee is needed. But as activities develop so too do the committees—not to mention the sub-committees! Soon there will be required rules for committee procedure. Precendents will develop. A constitution will be required. Anyone who has sat through the undiluted misery of a denominational debate on revising a constitution will know how sterile an exercise it is, and how far removed from the pattern of the Acts of the Apostles.

Furthermore, committees require convenors, who inevitably acquire a permanence and become a new establishment. The "Honorary Secretary" cannot combine his own work with the increasing burden, and a permanent secretariat is born. Parkinson's Law in its ecclesiastical version is soon

evident as work expands to fill the space allocated to it. The wheel turns full circle and one more denomination joins the already swollen ranks.
But there are more serious results. All too often an association or union of churches generates its own loyalty. People develop an emotional tie which tends to blind them to their basic loyalty to the gospel. If, then, the poison of error begins to seep into the structure they may feel themselves unable to act radically in defence of the truth. "Rocking the boat" is one of the major denominational crimes. The question for those about to launch such a boat is not whether the slipway is well prepared for the launch, but whether the boat should be launched at all!
There is little if any structural link between churches in the New Testament. The assembly in Acts 15 was, after all, a special occasion to deal with a particular problem which had arisen because false teaching which disturbed one church had emanated from another. Furthermore, in the New Testament situation, they still had the living presence of the Apostles, who, either directly or through their delegates like Timothy, directed the churches. But we are not so remote from that situation as it might seem. The apostolic testimony lived on after their death. It was embodied in the written New Testament. So we still have apostolic authority as the bond of union where churches have a common adherence to the supreme authority of the Word of God.
This leads to the conclusion so well summed up in the old adage that "one gospel ship can drop anchor alongside any other gospel ship". Any church which is subject to the Word can have church fellowship with any other such church. But we must be very careful before we decide to write into our constitution what we consider to be necessarily involved in such submission. Otherwise we will be repudiating many of our reformed and Puritan forebears whose submission to Scripture did not lead them to our conviction about baptism!
Some of us are in churches which are within existing denominations or associations. Others are independent of such links. To cut the knot of history with one neat snip of our theological scissors may seem very satisfying, and to substitute a better and, in our view, more biblically-orientated union, may seem most desirable. But let us set our ideas, our theories, and our aspirations in the context of history. Are we simply going to tread the old slope once again?
The call, it seems to me, is to emphasise our links with all true gospel churches, whether they are within our denominational orbit or outside it. We need to break down the rigidity of sectarian boundaries and not to erect new ones. In a day of apostasy, when many of the churches have abandoned the gospel let us aim to develop links with all those who remain true to the apostolic testimony. But let that fellowship be as free and as open as it seems to have been in the New Testament. Let us beware of developing structures or creating new institutions which may, in theory, be very correct, but may prove to be simply the repetition of the ever-recurring denominational theme.

The Christian and His use of Time

by Richard Chester, pastor of Caterham Baptist Church, Surrey

I AM WRITING ABOUT THIS SUBJECT SIMPLY BECAUSE OF ITS GREAT importance and not because I feel that I have mastered it in my own experience. On the contrary, it is something I have found increasingly difficult. I can thank God that over recent years I have been delivered from shallow and narrow Arminian concepts, and now see creation as "the theatre of God's glory", with its glories awaiting exploration. I see history as under God's control and I want to study it. I see that God has graciously enabled men to paint, to compose, to write, and I want to enjoy the fruits of their work. I believe as a Calvinist my front garden should bear better testimony to the mandate of Genesis 1 than the curse of Genesis 3! But all these things require time and application.

I want to consider two motives for redeeming the time and then give a number of directives as to how this can be done. These arise from things which the Lord has taught me in my own experience and though obviously coloured by the fact of my pastoral ministry will have wider application.

1. Motives for redeeming the time

I will limit myself to two motives which arise from Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 5:15, 16. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil". Motivation is tremendously important if we are going to stir ourselves up to do anything. So notice,

Time is precious

The word "redeem" means to buy out of a market. It is a word which gives us the idea of women at a sale snatching up bargains. So we are to snatch up our opportunities and make the most of our time. We sometimes speak about the stewardship of time and money and these two are similar in many respects. Both are precious. We "spend" time as we spend money. Time is a kind of currency which should be as carefully spent as our money.

I once read of a missionary in Japan who travelled to a particular engagement by a rather complicated system of public transport. When he arrived after his lengthy journey he was told off by an older missionary for not taking a taxi. Are we as careful about our time as we are about our money? It can be argued that time is more precious than money. If we lose money we may possibly recover it but time once spent, can never be recovered. When the Puritan Joseph Alleine was studying at

Oxford he had many friends, but if their visits interrupted his studying time "he had no leisure to let them in, saying, 'It is better that they should wonder at my rudeness than that I should lose my time; for only a few will take notice of the rudeness, but many may feel my loss of time'."[1] Alleine's whole life was an illustration of his saying, "Give me a Christian that counts his time more precious than gold". When the week began he would say, "Another week is now before us, let us spend this week for God", and each morning, "Now let us live this one day well!" "All the time of his health," writes his wife, "he did rise constantly at or before four o'clock, and on the Sabbath sooner, if he did wake; he would be much troubled if he heard any smiths, or shoemakers, or such tradesmen, at work at their trades before he was in his duties with God; saying to me after, 'O how this noise shames me! Doth not my master deserve more than theirs?' "[2] I shudder when I hear Christians talking of "killing time" or "filling in time". We are not to fill in time, we are to redeem it!

The days are evil

This means we must take care not to be affected by the spirit and outlook of the age in which we live. It is so easy to forget that our citizenship is in heaven and to take our standards of ease and leisure from the world. In the Song of Zacharias we read, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people". But why has he redeemed his people? ". . . that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:68, 74, 75). We are to redeem the time because we ourselves are redeemed. We are to live to him who bought us, taking care that the world does not squeeze us into its pattern.

Again, evil days call for Christians who are going to use all their time for God's glory. When the days are evil and the labourers few then it is even more imperative that Christians redeem the time. There is need all around us and the night comes when no man can work (John 9:4).

2. Directives for redeeming the time

We need to sort out our priorities

Unless we have decided what is important we can never redeem the time. The person who moves steadily from one task to another is inevitably the one who has determined what is important and has decided he is not going to waste time and energy on non-essentials. We always have time for what we judge to be important. For instance, the book fanatic always has time to read through the second-hand book lists and send off for that book he wants! So then, we need to consider the responsibilities, gifts and abilities God has given to us. We must fulfil these responsibilities and develop these gifts. We must not spend time and energy coveting the gifts of others. Our priorities will, of course, vary with differing

circumstances and each person must arrive at his own conclusions before the Lord. As we do this, however, let me remind you of three things for which the Lord Jesus had time.

Firstly, Christ had time for prayer. In all the activity of his ministry he found time for seasons of communion with his Father. How easy it is, like Martha, to be careful and troubled about many things and to neglect the one thing needful. At one extremely busy period in Luther's life he wrote in his diary, "I am so busy at this present time I cannot do with less than four hours each day in the presence of God". To put it at its very lowest—prayer saves time. To quote Luther again, "he that has prayed well has studied well". How easy it is to press on in the energy of the flesh and how much longer it takes! We must make time for prayer.

Secondly, our Lord had time for people. God forbid that we should carry out a time and motion study on our lives which makes us less than human! Jesus never gave the impression that others were intruding on the time of a very busy man. He had time to stop and talk—and listen. Have we?

Thirdly, he had time for relaxation. He had time to rest by a well and time to sleep in a boat. He had time to go to a wedding and time to take his disciples away for a rest. Nowhere does he give the impression that these things were of secondary importance. We need time for relaxation. But listen to the words of Jeremy Taylor, "Let not your recreations be lavish spenders of your time; but choose such as are healthful, short, transient, recreative, and apt to refresh you; but at no hand dwell upon them, or make them your great employment for he that spends his time in sports, and calls it recreation is like him whose garment is all made of fringes, and his meat nothing but sauces; they are healthless, chargeable, and useless. And, therefore, avoid such games as require much time or long attendance; or which are apt to steal thy affections from more severe employments".[3] The first thing we need to do is to sort out our priorities and let go of non-essentials.

We need to learn to live a day at a time

This is not just good advice. Scripture clearly teaches that God deals with us in days. At creation he made a day the basic measurement of time and all the way through the Scriptures God's dealings with man have been on a daily basis. We are taught to pray each day for our daily bread. The manna was given daily to inculcate daily trust. God promises that "as your days so shall your strength be" in order that we might prove him each day. We are forbidden to worry about tomorrow for every day has trouble enough of its own. Paul speaks of the inward man being renewed day by day and exhorts us not to let the sun go down upon our wrath.

I find it very easy to live in the future—that is, to persuade myself that

circumstances will be more favourable when such and such has happened, or when I have got a particular task behind me. Our failure is that we do not buy up the present opportunities. We forget that God has a plan and purpose for each day and our first waking desire should be that of Alleine's, "Now let me live this one day well!"

If we go into each day assured of the Father's plan, then we will not be perplexed when the unexpected happens or when interruptions come. How easy it is to go out in the morning with good intentions of all we are going to achieve and then interruptions come or friends call unexpectedly. Frustration sets in and the sovereignty of God becomes a mere theory. How differently the Lord Jesus reacted to his interruptions. When the crowds anticipated his place of rest (Mark 6:31-34), when the poor woman interrupted his journey to the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5: 25-34), how did our Lord react? In each case he accepted the interruption and took advantage of it. His poise was not disturbed because these things were already accounted for in his Father's plan. They became stepping-stones not stumbling-blocks. May God teach us to live a day at a time and what we cannot complete in one day we must be happy to leave until the next.

We need to exercise self-discipline

I wonder how many of us can see ourselves in the true-to-life picture of the sluggard that is given us in the book of Proverbs. "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing" (20:4). He is one who has got so used to making soft choices that he can never do anything costly. "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets" (26:13). The sluggard is one who has got so used to making excuses (even ridiculous ones like this!) that he really comes to believe they are valid. "As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed" (26:14), in other words he never makes any progress! He would like to do things, but he is so tired he cannot face them now. "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason" (26:16). He is a master at rationalising his laziness. He has really come to believe he is fully stretched and is more convincing in arguing his case than seven rational men.

Of course, some find the matter of self-discipline easier than others. Some are orderly in their thinking and behaviour, others are not. However, one fruit of the Spirit is self-control. This brings self-discipline into the scope of every spiritual man and woman. There are two areas in particular where we need to exercise discipline.

Firstly, regarding sleep (both going to bed and getting up!). John Angell James was one of the great evangelical non-conformist leaders of the last century. He went to Carr's Lane, Birmingham, in 1805 when the congregation numbered about 150 and were mostly elderly people. For

the first seven years of his ministry he met with little success and much discouragement. In 1813 there was a marked change in his preaching and many were converted under his ministry so that in 1859 the congregation had risen to 1,800. He attributed his early failure to his own lack of diligent study and thorough preparation for the pulpit. Later in life he wrote, "I deeply regret much mis-spent time, and greatly deplore that I did not, from the commencement of ministerial life, acquire the habit of early rising. Oh, what time I have slept away and for ever lost!" Secondly, regarding odd moments. Again, discipline is needed to "fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run". Moments are wasted in travelling or waiting for a meal or sitting at the barbers. We need to keep a book of collected letters or short articles for times like these. Neither must we assume that because we have one engagement arranged for an evening we can do nothing else that same evening. There are times when we can write a letter or two. I have found I must never wait until I have time to write letters—otherwise I would never write any! Beware of the daily newspaper. Dr. Kevan's advice to his students was—"read the newspaper standing up and when you are tired it is time to stop!"

Richard Baxter, the remarkable pastor at Kidderminster, was a man who exercised discipline regarding his use of time. Amidst all his visiting and pastoral duties he found time to write 128 books and his total writings cover 35,000 closely printed pages. Yet towards the end of his life he could complain, "I have these 40 years been sensible of the sin of wasting time!" He tells us, "for the Saints Rest I had four months vacancy to write it (but in the midst of continual languishing and medicine). But for the rest, I wrote them in the crowd of all my other employments which would allow me no great leisure for polishing and exactness, or any ornament".[4]

We need a variety of activities

We might be excused for thinking that if we fill every moment with activity we will be worn out at the end of a month. My experience, however, has been that it is not so much the amount of activity that causes tiredness, but rather that it is the lack of variety that causes staleness. A man can come home from the office, have his evening meal and sink into the armchair worn out. Then his friend calls inviting him to a game of golf or tennis and suddenly all his tiredness is gone! He is refreshed even at the thought of a change of activity. It is interesting that immediately after Paul has pointed out the danger of weariness in well doing, he exhorts, "as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:9, 10). There may be a danger that our "well-doing" may become rather rigidly defined. We might think of it, for instance, in terms of attendance at church worship, taking a Sunday School class and perhaps occasionally visiting a sick friend. Perhaps if we broadened our horizons a

little we would return to these other important activities feeling greatly refreshed.

In this connection I have been learning afresh the importance of doing everything heartily, as to the Lord. For instance, I know that it is my responsibility as a father to spend time with my children. But I have found it very easy to do this in a legalistic fashion with my mind on other things, so that I almost begrudge the time spent in this way. Similarly, pastors may be told of their duty to spend one evening a week sitting with their wife. So they come out of the study armed with a pile of papers and books and simply change their place of work for one evening! When I play with my children or relax with my wife, I must do it heartily as to the Lord.

We need to discipline our children to redeem the time.

It is most important that our children are taught to work. Young children can be taught to make their own beds and help with the washing up. Older ones can help with the housework and garden and, if firmness is accompanied by encouragement, they soon come to accept and even enjoy it. This is not only a blessing to the children but also it makes life a good deal easier for the parents. How tragic that in some Christian homes mothers are almost at their wits' end because their teenage children never lift a hand to help.

We need to remember we are not indispensible.

Andrew Bonar once made the following remark to a friend concerning 1 Corinthians 16:12, "What a comfort that verse is!" People sometimes write so pressingly: "You must come, it is an opportunity of usefulness". Paul says, "Apollos would not come and he is not blamed for it". It is not easy to say "No", but sometimes we must be willing to do so.

Here, then, are some practical directives which I have found useful. As we come to regret deeply the time we have wasted there are two reactions we might make, both of which are quite wrong. We might indulge in vain regrets and keep looking back and saying, "If only . . ." If this is so we need to read again 1 Corinthians 15:8-10. Paul sorrows over his early persecution of the church. But what is the attitude of this "late starter"?—"I laboured more abundantly than they all". That's the spirit! We must not be paralysed by vain regrets. God can restore the years that the locusts have eaten. The other reaction is to put off redeeming the time until the circumstances are more convenient. Procrastination is still the thief of time. The convenient season, like the horizon, disappears as you draw near to it. Let us begin today. Let us live *this* day to God's glory. Redeem the time because the days are evil.

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Love Feasts

THE REFORMED MOVEMENT CONTINUES to show progress in every continent of the world and one of the main means of encouragement and edification is the gathering together of those who have a vital interest in the practical application of the doctrines of grace especially as they affect the local church.

Al Martin broke new ground in his travels in Pakistan this year. That is wonderful news indeed. Oh that many similar neglected countries could benefit likewise! Of course the difficulties will be ominous and these there were. Likewise unexpected problems to do with pioneering were confronted during July at a family conference in California, but the spiritual profit greatly exceeded any loss, pastors from lonely far-flung outposts receiving encouragement. The Canadians completed their first Conference this year. When we say *first* we refer to the kind of "love feast" referred to above, not intellectual Calvinism which, although it has benefits for the mind, bypasses essential aspects of application. The South Africans met again at Skoegheim (see photos on back inside cover). This annual conference together with monthly study groups in main cities has meant much in spreading abroad good things for the soul.

Interesting accounts of these "love feasts" could take up our space but since there is room for only one we will refer to the Australians who have recently completed their second Reformed Studies Conference held again in Melbourne. It is for brevity's sake that we refer to the speakers as follows: Fowler, Kingdon, Porter, Paxton, Cox and Rowe.

Mr. Fowler dealt with the subject of "What it is to be Reformed" and gave the following definition, "the heart experience with God in Christ by his Spirit". This he maintained was "the starting point for the Reformed Faith," but "also the continuing dynamic by which we must proceed". He described Reformed theology as having three leading characteristics. 1. It will "be a theology of the Word" and "under the Word" over against "priestly authoritarianism" and "intellectual authoritarianism". 2. It will be "a theology of reformation", doing "a work of ongoing creative thought under the authority of Scripture". 3. It will be a "theology of grace" with its "primary emphasis on the grace of God in redemption".

David Kingdon handled a theme in which he has had much experience, namely, training for the ministry. He also gave a paper on church planting in the New Testament and stressed the fact that the apostles planted churches in the large cities. Paul, he said, sought the conversion of whole families and also practised the team method of evangelism. In a paper on the Anabaptists he warned against difficulties in exercising discipline, namely, the avoiding of legalism on the one hand and of laxity on the other.

Geoffrey Paxton has gained a reputation for himself of a Samson who slays Charismatics not by their tens but by their hundreds. He took up the the question of "Reforming Reformed Theology". He described the methodology of Reformed Theology, *vis-a-vis* "the Charismatic onslaught". He pointed out that the Charismatics appeal to phenomena, whereas such phenomena may be Satanic perversion, and even when they were God-given signs, as in the New Testament times, they may produce only "a temporal faith". He emphasised the sola scriptura method which appealed to Scripture alone as the clear, necessary and sufficient authority. While he acknowledged that all passages of Scripture were not equally clear yet the Gospel was clearly revealed. This is the ground upon which we must consider the Charismatic developments, or anything else for that matter.

Norman Porter, a former MP in North-

ern Ireland but now a wellknown minister in Adelaide, addressed the subject of "Contending for the Faith Today". He dealt with the problem of the easy believism so prevalent today and also the prevalence of simple formulae for conversion as well as the predominance of a distaste for doctrinal preaching. These weaknesses call for faithful and persevering contention for the faith and we must not be weakened by the general apathy which is abroad today.

James Cox in speaking on the "Application of the Reformed Faith Today" warned against narrowness, intolerance, legalism and lovelessness. He not only declared that we must possess an intelligent grasp of the Reformed Faith but also the vital necessity to maintain a spiritual glow. He warned against dry intellectualism both in preaching and writing.

Allan Rowe on "Local Church Development Today" stressed the fact that the local church is a form of theocracy with Jesus Christ to be recognised as King in all realms of the church.

British Evangelical Council Annual Conference, Westminster Chapel

Monday evening and all day day Nov. 3 and 4, 1975. Speakers, Peter Seccombe, Geoff Thomas, Leith Samuel and Donald MacLeod. For information write to Rev. T. C. Grayston, 14 Jebb Street, Bow, London E.3. Tel.: 01-980 5711.

The Sixth Carey Conference
to be held at "Hugh Stewart Hall"
University of Nottingham

The conference is to commence at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, December 30, 1975 and ends after breakfast on Friday, January 2, 1976. The preacher each evening: Ferrell Griswold of the U.S.A. Further details and booking (£3.00 deposit required) can be obtained from John Rubens at his new address as follows:

36 Longden Close,
Northwood End,
HAYNES,
Beds.

Fifth Evangelical and Reformed Studies Conference, Skoegheim, Natal

The speakers at the conference during July were Holdt, Hulse, Kingdon, Carson, Tyler and van Zyl. The gathering was well attended with an increase in those representing non-white groups.
The theme for the conference was "Common Grace" and it again proved most helpful to have a theme which was expounded in detail. All the sessions were edifying, not only from an intellectual but also from a practical point of view. For some highlights were the papers by Tyler in which he drew out most helpful lessons from the life of Luther, and van Zyl in which he traced out the decline in common grace today. Herbert Carson preached on "For of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory for ever", on which high note the gathering concluded. David Kingdon presented a paper on the subject of suffering which we hope to include in three sections in future issues of the magazine.

Top of page, standing from left, Herbert Carson, Obed Mothiba, Gwenneth Kingdon, Rina Evans, Colin Reid, Moses Mogano, Mokubu Morapa, Philip Segoa and Steven Manthlwa. *Kneeling:* Robin Scullard, Vic Lazarus, Jim van Zyl and George Stranex who is the secretary for the conference. *Below from left*, Ron Naude, Les Green, David Kingdon, Jim van Zyl, Erroll Hulse, Herbert Carson and Clive Tyler.

NUMBER 27 SEPT-OCT 1975

Reformation Today is a bi-monthly magazine published by Cuckfield Baptist Church, Sussex.

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Subscriptions

BRITISH ISLES	£1.50
AUSTRALIA	A$3.00
U.S.A.	U.S.$5.00
CANADA	C$5.00
SOUTH AFRICA	R3.00
NEW ZEALAND	N.Z.$3.00

Single copies one-sixth the above in each case which includes postage.

Gifts are welcomed and those who wish to support the Magazine should make out their cheques to "Reformation Today".

Printed by Stanley L. Hunt (Printers) Ltd, Midland Road, Rushden, Northants